UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.12/1993/SR.34
3 December 1993

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 30 November 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. ALSTON

later: Mr. MUTERAHEJURU

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GE.93-19691 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS (agenda item 4) (continued)

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Second periodic report of Mexico concerning articles 1 to 15 (E/1990/6/Add.4, E/C.12/1993/WP.16, HRI/CORE/1/Add.1)

1. Mrs. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ (Mexico) said that her delegation had been presented with a substantial number of interesting and important questions although it had not always been possible to obtain sufficient information in the short time available to reply to them in full.

2. Mr. Ceausu had asked why children aged 12 to 14 had been included in the census of the employed population if they were forbidden to work. They were indeed forbidden by law, but the National Statistics, Geography and Information Technology Institute (INEGI) had included them in the 1990 census in order to provide more accurate indicators of the real situation in Mexico. There were parents and guardians who, in violation of the law, abandoned their children under 14. There were also children who were working in family businesses as apprentices.

3. Mr. Muterahejuru took the Chair.

4. Mr. Ceausu had also asked what administrative and legal recourse could be had by individuals to acts by the administrative authorities which violated their rights. A legal system existed at a series of levels up to the application for legal protection under the remedy of amparo. Under article 103 of the Constitution, the Mexican courts resolved all disputes concerning laws and acts by the authorities which violated the rights of the individual. The second part of the article established the remedy of amparo and was directly related to Article 14 of the Constitution which prohibited the retroactive application of laws against individuals and established the right of a hearing for all the inhabitants of the Republic, and not just for Mexicans. Article 103 of the Constitution protected individual guarantees against acts of authority under federal law. Amparo could be invoked against any act of any authority which violated the rights of the individual, whether on an individual, social, constitutional or ordinary basis. In order to enable justice to be more accessible, official lawyers could be appointed and there were several types of government procurators offices (to protect workers, consumers, minors and the family and the environment, for example). The structure of the federal judiciary was composed of the Supreme Court of Justice, the collegiate and unipersonal circuit courts, the district courts, the Office of the Attorney-General of the Republic, the Office of the Government Procurator of the Federal District, the Office of the Government Procurator of the States of the Republic and the Public Prosecutor's Office. The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) ensured compliance with the protection of human rights. It implemented preventive and coordination measures to safeguard the human rights of Mexicans and of foreigners (in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

5. Any individual who alleged that his human rights had been violated must appeal to the appropriate authority; in criminal cases, the appropriate remedies were reconsideration, complaint for refusal of leave to appeal and amparo; and in civil cases, reconsideration, appeal, special appeal, complaint, judicial liability and amparo. The complainant might also appeal to CNDH which would advise him on the legal measures available to him. If all legal remedies had been exhausted, it would make a recommendation.

6. The federal Act on Liability of Public Officials provided that the Commission could invoke the responsibility of any authority for failure to comply with its obligations. Public officials were expected to adhere to certain moral and professional standards and failure to do so rendered them liable to sanctions. Any individual could enter a complaint concerning the work of a public official if he were adversely affected by it; offices where complaints and denunciations could be submitted were of easy access to the public. Penalties for public officials included suspension and economic sanctions. If the competent authority ignored the complaint, there was a series of legal remedies which could be invoked by the complainant, including denunciation on the basis of article 215 of the Penal Code and the recourse of amparo. If, when the remedies were exhausted, the complainant still believed that his human rights had been violated, he could approach the National Human Rights Commission which in accordance with its Organization Act of 1992 could hear cases concerning the omission or failure to act of any authority.

7. She had also been asked if the texts of the two international Covenants had been published in the Diario Oficial and whether it was possible for the ordinary citizen to consult them. That was indeed the case. The President of the Republic was the only authority empowered to negotiate international treaties and conventions, which were then submitted to the Senate for approval; a treaty meant any instrument recording international bilateral or multilateral commitments in accordance with the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, ratified by Mexico in 1974. Both Covenants had been published in the Diario Oficial and both had been ratified in 1981. The text could be found in public and university libraries or in the offices of the Diario Oficial and could be purchased for a small sum in government offices. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had issued sets of international agreements, while the National Human Rights Commission had published a compilation of five centuries of documents, including international and national conventions, which contained the Covenants, and it gave lectures, and held seminars and round tables on them. There were also simple publications containing basic information on human rights which could be obtained free of charge by the general public.

8. In connection with article 1, Mr. Marchan had asked about the claims to self-determination of indigenous peoples in Mexico and the attitude of the Mexican State. If indigenous peoples were considered to be those who had stated that they wished to keep alive their individual culture, the Mexican Government and the National Indigenous Peoples Institute were making every effort to promote that aspiration and conserve all aspects of the internal organization of such peoples. Mexico had no movements which claimed the right to self-determination or separation from the State. The programmes

of the Government and the Institute assured support and respect for the idiosyncrasies of the indigenous peoples and did not attempt to impose external forms alien to their cultural identity.

9. In reply to the question as to whether the different sections of the population rejected racism and racial discrimination, she said that such was generally the case. Isolated instances might exist but there was neither animosity nor any racist reaction. Mexicans regarded it as a matter of pride to have indigenous blood.

10. Moving on to questions on articles 6 to 9, she recalled that Mr. Rattray had asked about criteria for defining indigenous persons and whether racial aspects predominated over cultural aspects. In Mexico, indigenous persons were considered to be the descendants of indigenous cultures whose features they conserved. At the 1970 census, the National Indigenous Peoples Institute had already proposed that all persons speaking an indigenous language should be classified as indigenous.

11. In connection with the migrant workers' programme organized in conjunction with the Government of Canada, the Mexican State guaranteed respect for the rights of the individual and had established a system whereby the conditions in the centres where migrant workers lived and worked could be assessed; if those conditions were the cause of risk to life or health, the worker could be withdrawn under a procedure vis-à-vis the Canadian authorities. In such cases the Canadian employer bore the cost of repatriating the worker; in any case contracts were inspected by the Mexican Government prior to signature.

12. Mr. Badawi had asked about the numbers of persons employed in the formal sector and also working in the informal sector. That was a very difficult question to answer although, according to a 1976 survey of employment conducted by the International Labour Organisation, which had established Mexico as a pioneer in Latin America and the Caribbean in the planning of labour policy, 38 per cent of the urban employed population was employed in the informal sector. The survey had been updated in 1984 and the figure for the informal sector had declined to 35.3 per cent. In 1988, of the total number of wage earners, 83 per cent were to be found in the formal sector and 17 per cent in the nformal sector. However, the 1988 survey gave different results according to different criteria used to measure informality. On the basis of the position or category in employment a rate of 26.1 per cent was obtained, whereas if the minimum wage was used as a criterion, rates of between 33.6 per cent and 38.5 per cent were obtained, and if the size of the establishment and the category in employment were combined and used as a criterion, the rate obtained was nearly 38 per cent. It was impossible to obtain a proper breakdown of persons working in the two sectors.

13. Mrs. Taya had asked about minimum wages in Mexico. The minimum wage was that paid for a day's work which was needed to satisfy the normal needs of the head of a family, including the education of the children, which was obligatory. Reference had already been made earlier to the system to establish, review and assess minimum wages.

14. In reply to a question from Mr. Badawi concerning the weight attached to the recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission, she said that the Commission received complaints from individuals concerning the misuse of authority by the State or local authorities. The Commission's recommendations were published periodically, together with information on any action taken by the authorities in compliance with the recommendations. Although the recommendations were not binding, public opinion attached great importance to them, thereby lending them considerable weight. The Commission had no legal authority to enforce its recommendations, although the authorities tended increasingly to comply with them. The Commission had been set up in 1990 and charged with providing individuals with a rapid and flexible means of protecting their rights. Investigation by the Commission of alleged abuse did not prevent individuals from seeking redress through the legal channels. Once the Commission had concluded its investigation, its substantiated findings were sent to the head of the administrative authority concerned and were made public. The authority in question had a fortnight to decide whether or not it accepted the Commission's recommendations, against which there was no provision for appeal.

15. In reply to a question from Mrs. Taya, concerning the in-bond assembly plants (maquiladoras) located along the frontier with the United States, which allegedly employed Mexican workers on exploitative terms, as well as being responsible for pollution, she said that Mexico had entered into a number of agreements with the United States concerning transboundary pollution. She cited in particular the agreement on cooperation to protect and improve the environment in the frontier zone, known as the La Paz Agreement, signed in August 1983. The Agreement contained a number of annexes, two of which regulated, in particular, air quality in the vicinity of the copper smelters located on the frontier between Mexico and the United States of America and transboundary air pollution in cities. In 1992, Mexico and the United States had signed an environmental programme for the frontier zone. During the first biennium of the programme's implementation, both Governments would make funds available for coordinating policy to combat transboundary pollution. The programme was supervised by a bi-national environmental commission, and covered such aspects as the establishment of stations to monitor air quality, the establishment of an inventory of emissions and the collection of data on dumps located in the vicinity of a number of border towns. In the national sphere, since 1988, a comprehensive law on the ecological equilibrium had been in force, chapter 1 of which regulated atmospheric pollution within Mexico.

16. Turning to the issue of the economic, social and cultural consequences of the entry into force of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), raised by Mr. Texier and Mr. Grissa, and the question of whether Mexico might not simply become a source of cheap labour for its powerful neighbours, she said that Mexico expected the NAFTA to lead to improved trading opportunities and for better paid and more highly qualified jobs for its workforce, thereby improving the living conditions of Mexicans and, consequently, their economic, social and cultural standards. However, those results were not expected before the medium term. During the whole of the negotiating process leading up to the NAFTA, considerable attention had been focused on the economic, social and cultural conditions of each country. There was a 15-year transition period to full free trade, during which quotas applied to imports of products such as, for example, maize, with heavy tariffs if imports

exceeded the quotas, in order to protect traditional producers. Her Government had carried out a number of studies into the impact of NAFTA on traditional producers of maize, which she would make available to the Committee. The NAFTA provided for similar systems of quotas and tariffs to permit sensitive areas of the Mexican economy to adjust gradually to the free trade regime. When President Clinton had taken office, he had drawn attention to the need for so-called "supplemental" legislation to address various environmental and labour concerns. Moreover, in the preamble to the treaty the three signatories committed themselves to protecting and enhancing the fundamental rights of their workers.

17. In conjunction with the NAFTA, negotiations which had concluded in August 1993 had led to the adoption of four specific and independent agreements or understandings relating to cooperation in the sphere of the employment, environmental cooperation, machinery to coordinate and finance infrastructure projects in the frontier zone and an understanding in respect of emergency measures. The parallel agreements were not an integral part of the NAFTA, but developed a number of its provisions on the basis of international public and private law and of administrative law. The agreements relating to cooperation in the spheres of employment and the environment were particularly relevant to the Committee.

18. The agreement on cooperation in the labour sphere was viewed by Mexico as a means of improving the working conditions, the level of training and standard of living of its population. In Mexico's view, it was indispensable for the International Labour Organisation to be associated with those agreements. Each State undertook to implement its own labour legislation. In that connection, she pointed out that while Mexico was a party to over 80 ILO Conventions, the United States was a party to only 11. The agreement established a set of 10 principles common to all three countries, under which each party undertook to publicize its labour legislation, to ensure due legal process and to seek on a continuing basis to improve the working and living conditions of its population. The agreement also provided for a series of institutional mechanisms, including a labour commission to supervise implementation, to promote cooperation and to facilitate inter-State consultation. It further made provision for machinery for resolving problems and for the establishment of an independent expert commission chaired by ILO. The Council of Ministers, which was part of the labour commission, could also decide to set up an arbitration panel. The problem-resolving machinery, which was operative in the spheres of occupational hygiene and safety and that of work by minors or minimum wages, only came into operation if it had not been possible to settle the dispute through the relevant national offices, at the level of the Council of Ministers, through a committee of independent experts, chaired by ILO or within the Ministerial Council.

19. In its preamble, the agreement on cooperation in the sphere of labour reasserted the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike, the prohibition on forced labour and various other fundamental rights of employees.

20. In turn, the agreement on environmental cooperation had as its prime objective the development of cooperation to protect and improve the environment and ensure effective compliance with national law. Among the

commitments made by the parties to the agreement were the commitment to define their own environmental protection norms, constantly to improve the environment, to provide information on the state of the environment, to ensure public access to the procedure provided for by environmental legislation. The agreement set up institutional machinery comprising a Council, a secretariat and a joint advisory committee, together with Government-to-Government dispute-settlement machinery, involving arbitration and economic and trade sanctions.

21. As a whole, the parallel agreements on labour and environmental issues specified the rights and obligations of the three Governments, and, more important, they also authorized the citizens of the three countries to demand that their authorities should comply strictly with their own environmental and labour legislation. The agreements thereby institutionalized individual protection in terms of the environment and work. It was particularly important that the agreements relating to work and the environment made it possible for individuals to file complaints concerning non-compliance with labour or environmental legislation.

22. Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño had referred to the findings of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations in respect of Mexico's compliance with ILO Conventions, and had said that she could see no justification for the prohibition on more than one trade union representing workers within a particular ministry. She had also asked whether a single trade union represented workers in all ministries and whether there was a single trade union for public servants.

23. Labour legislation relating to State employees had been developed over time, with the participation of the employees themselves, who had constantly expressed the importance they attached to trade union unity. For that reason, she was surprised by the allegation that State employees had expressed the desire for several trade unions to be authorized within each ministry. In Mexico each ministry had its own trade union, and the unions as a whole were grouped in a federation which represented various shades of political opinion. The trade unions were sufficiently powerful to have their own elected representatives in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Undoubtedly, if the trade unions themselves desired to introduce trade union pluralism within ministries, they would introduce appropriate legislation before the Chamber of Deputies.

24. Mr. GRISSA had asked, with regard to the employment of children, whether there was not a conflict between the rights to education and the large number of children aged over 12 who left school to work. He had also suggested that the minimum wage evolved more slowly than the rate of inflation, and that its purchasing power had thus declined.

25. The Mexican education system was an open one, and made provision to allow workers to complete their basic education either through evening courses or at night school. Moreover, the importance of training was recognized by the Federal Labour Act, which made it compulsory for employers to provide training to allow workers to improve their skills and earnings.

26. Mr. GRISSA, requesting the floor on a point of clarification, said that it was difficult for a child who had left primary school to return to the educational process later. Thus, training at the workplace would appear to be insufficient to help children to catch up on their lost education.

27. Mrs. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ (Mexico) said that while agreeing that, ideally, a child should be able to concentrate only on his studies, the experience in Mexico had shown that young people often went to work before beginning their university studies and that that had not caused them any harm. She referred in that regard to the example of Benito Juárez, an illiterate shepherd who had started his studies while working, had gone on to complete law school and had eventually become the President of Mexico.

28. Mr. Grissa had also referred to a document describing the alleged ill-treatment of persons said to have been forced to abandon their lands or their employment by gunmen or members of the police. As she had already pointed out earlier, her delegation would welcome more precise information on allegations, such as where the events were said to have taken place and whether it appeared that members of a special police force were involved. Further information was needed before she could respond. A number of problems had, in fact, arisen in connection with land ownership in the south, where fighting had broken out between different groups. Peasants and the indigenous population had often been involved in such isolated incidents in Oaxaca and Chiapas. It was worth noting that the National Human Rights Commission and the states concerned had set up programmes to protect the more disadvantaged segments of the population where such problems had arisen. As soon as she obtained more details, she would forward them in writing to the Committee.

29. Mr. Grissa had also inquired what expectations Mexico had placed in the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In reply to his question whether Mexico expected to become a source of poorly paid labour, she said that Mexico had involuntarily played that role for many years. At the end of the First World War, there had been a great shortage of manpower in the United States of America, and Mexican labour had been welcome. The trend had continued apace until after the Second World War, but in recent years the manpower requirements of the United States had declined, leading to an agreement on migrant workers with Mexico; that had unfortunately fostered the phenomenon of illegal migration. Such migration continued, because wages in Mexico were lower, in comparative terms, than in the United States and Canada. But Mexico did not regard itself as a supplier of cheap labour and hoped that increased trade in the wake of the NAFTA would give rise to growing employment opportunities.

30. Replying to a question asked by Mr. Badawi, she said that a support programme had been established to provide assistance to adolescents (12 to 19 years of age). In 1992, courses had been held, scholarships had been granted to nearly 1,000 children in that category, and follow-up activities had been pursued. In the Federal District, a number of programmes had been conducted in secondary schools in poor neighbourhoods. Courses were offered on physical and psychological development, drug addiction, family planning and infectious diseases, and adolescents could also receive training and vocational guidance. Emphasis was placed on promoting culture, sports and recreation so as to teach adolescents to make better use of their free time

and to deter anti-social behaviour. The National System for the Integrated Development of the Family was working to expand community development centres. A number of efforts aimed at improving the condition of adolescents within the family. Lastly, article 18 of the Mexican Constitution provided that minors who had committed offences were to benefit from special treatment.

31. Concerning the problem of street children, she said that a study had been recently conducted in the capital, and a document had been produced entitled the Mexico City Study of Street Children, a copy of which would be forwarded to the United Nations Children's Fund and could be consulted. An information centre and data bank had been established on the question. In 1992, workshops involving more than 4,000 minors and their families had been held, the goal being to persuade those children to return home. The workshops also included educational, health care and training programmes for children and parents alike. In the Federal District, workshops had been conducted to give street children the alternative of paid employment. Recreational and health centres had been set up for more than 7,000 adolescents. She said that more detailed information on those and other questions would be provided in the report that Mexico would submit to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 1994.

32. The question raised by Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan had touched upon the painful problem of drug addiction among children. Mexico had a grave problem with glue sniffing, and her Government was endeavouring to find a remedy. Mexico's Plan of Action included a programme that focused on prevention and on the treatment and rehabilitation of children who sniffed glue. More than 500,000 minors had participated in information programmes. Many children had been placed in homes. The population at large had taken an active interest in such programmes. The Government provided treatment for the addicted child, offered family guidance and promoted an information campaign in schools.

33. Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan had referred to cases of young persons exploited by groups encouraging child prostitution. That was a problem that occurred on Mexico's northern frontier in certain areas, when migrant children who crossed the border looking for work or for their parents fell into the hands of bands that exploited them. The phenomenon took place mostly on the other side of the border.

34. In accordance with article 261 of Mexico's Penal Code, the rape of a child under 12 years of age was punishable by one year in prison. A campaign had begun to institute heavier penalties for that offence. The government body set up to hear allegations of sexual offences gave special attention to cases involving minors.

35. She had no information on AIDS. Some children had AIDS because they had contracted it from their parents, but she did not have any statistics on children who had contracted the illness through prostitution or drug addiction. She would request information from her Government and would convey it to the Committee as soon as possible.

36. Mr. Texier had asked about the Guatemalan refugees in the States of Chiapas and Campeche. She said that there were 42,000 Guatemalan refugees in those two States, 700 of them political refugees. Those persons had received

the assistance not only of the Mexican Government but also of the World Food Programme, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Union. Of the 42,000 refugees, 27 per cent resided in Campeche and 55 per cent in Chiapas, and 18 per cent had agreed to be transferred to Quintana Roo. In the past year, the number of Guatemalan refugees had decreased by 5 per cent because of a continued process of voluntary repatriation. Refugees stated in writing and orally that they wished to be repatriated. In a mission to the area in November and December 1992, the World Food Programme had reported that the Guatemalan refugees in Campeche and Quintana Roo had reached a level of self-support. In Campeche, 47 small businesses had been opened by refugees, and Guatemalan refugees of Mayan extraction had rebuilt an archaeological monument in the area. As part of the Government's support programme, grants had been made available to refugee students to study in Mexican secondary schools.

37. The births of children to refugee parents in Mexico were recorded in the civil register; owing to the remoteness of some refugee communities, such as those in Chiapas, special teams of registrars were sent to the areas concerned. Some 1,000 births to Guatemalan refugee parents had already been recorded.

38. The first collective repatriation of refugees had taken place on 20 January 1993, an operation in which the federal, State and municipal authorities, as well as a number of NGOs and the church organizations, had collaborated. With reference to a question asked by Mr. Texier, refugees were aware of repatriation opportunities, being consulted at all stages of the process. Facilities were provided in the refugee communities to promote activities aimed at self-sufficiency, with international support and collaboration, including that of UNHCR. With regard to education, approximately 7,600 refugee children were receiving formal primary education, 656 attended open primary school, 500 were at the open secondary stage, 105 were at the advanced secondary level and 5 were at the preparatory stage for tertiary education. In addition, literacy and special intensive training courses were being held in Campeche and Quintana Roo.

39. With regard to the question raised by Mrs. Jiménez Butragueño concerning a decree published in the Diario Oficial of 30 December 1992, she regretted having been unable to obtain the requisite information but would endeavour to do so quickly.

40. Replying to the questions raised by Mr. Grissa, she said that no ethnic groups lived on reservations in Mexico, whose population in general contained a high proportion of indigenous inhabitants. All separate communities existed of their own volition, and there were no restrictions on their freedom to disperse or move elsewhere; they enjoyed free ownership of communal land and access to all levels of education. Many persons of indigenous background were prominent in administration and the liberal professions; her own maternal grandmother, a full-blooded Mexican indian, had been a doctor.

41. Mr. Kouznetsov, in asking about the links between government and higher educational institutions, had cited a document which had not yet been made available to her delegation and on which, therefore, she could not comment. It could be stated, however, that universities and other higher education

centres were completely autonomous, including those funded from federal or State sources. Further details relating to the education of indigenous groups had been given in her replies to the questions raised by the Pre-Sessional Working Group, and appeared in Mexico's report pursuant to the Covenant on the Rights of the Child. She reiterated that one major difficulty stemmed from the itinerant nature of many indigenous communities, chiefly on account of the agricultural work cycle.

42. She noted that Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan, referring to paragraphs 387-389 of the report (E/1990/6/Add.4), had voiced concern about the implied lack of action to promote the cultures of indigenous peoples. In fact, a great deal had been done in that regard. Some 20 indigenous languages were regularly translated, and there were university courses in Nahuatl and a number of other languages. She regretted not having further detailed information on the subject, but would arrange to have it provided.

43. Replying to a question raised by Mr. Rattray, she said that it was impossible to make a categorical comparison between the quality of private education and that of the free, public system. The State fulfilled its duty to provide free, high-quality education; at the same time, in a market economy, private education was available. Some opposition to the State curriculum was voiced here and there, chiefly on religious grounds since it was wholly secular. It should be noted that a number of prominent people in political and other spheres had been educated in State schools.

44. Mr. Alston resumed the Chair.

45. Replying to a question put by Mr. Grissa about income distribution, she said that the Government was amending the fiscal measures to make them fairer; in addition, Congress had before it recent proposals, agreed upon by the Government, employers and workers, aimed at reducing the latter's fiscal burden and giving priority attention to minimum-income workers by raising the tax threshold, as a result of which some 7 million workers would be exempt from taxation; while some 4.8 million non-workers had been brought into the taxation net, compared to 1.7 million in 1988. The current fiscal reforms and the streamlining of the public sector would, by reducing costs, release more funds for social development purposes.

46. She hoped that the Committee would find her delegation's replies satisfactory, and assured it that replies to the unanswered questions would be forwarded in writing to the secretariat as soon as possible.

47. Mr. SIMMA said that he would appreciate replies to several additional questions that he would like to put, having been unavoidably absent the previous day.

48. Firstly, he wondered why the Mexican Constitution, deemed one of the foremost in its attention to economic, social and cultural rights, made no mention of the right to adequate food. Secondly, he wondered why the government schemes for subsidized food supplies, including school meals, were not focused on those rural areas, mostly populated by indigenous groups, where food and nutrition problems were greatest. Thirdly, he would appreciate details on the processes of selecting the targets for such schemes, in urban

and rural areas alike, and of any monitoring process, including information as to whether the beneficiaries themselves participated in monitoring and evaluation. Fourthly, with regard to housing, it seemed that the organization involved with the poorer sectors, FONHAPO, was receiving a steadily decreasing proportion of the State resources allocated to national programmes for shelter, which seemingly implied that a growing share was finding its way to the less needy; he would like to know whether, if that was so, any remedy was envisaged.

49. Mr. GRISSA said he would like to have further information, divided according to ethnic groups and to urban and rural areas, on the numbers of children failing to complete their education, since, according to the report and other information provided, some 45 per cent of Mexican children did not even complete primary education.

50. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN reiterated her concern about the implications of paragraphs 387-389 of the report, which clearly stated that there were no national or institutional programmes to promote the culture of indigenous peoples, and that the latter had no access, or only very limited access, to manifestations of culture promoted and supported by the State. She wished to have clarification in that regard.

51. Mrs. AHODIKPE wished to know what measures existed relating to the situation of abandoned children, including details of adoption measures.

52. Mrs. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ (Mexico), replying to the previous speaker's question, said that details about measures relating to abandoned children could be found in the documentation submitted to the Committee; further details were contained in Mexico's report pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

53. Referring to the concern expressed by Mrs. Bonoan-Dandan about paragraphs 387-389 of the report, she felt that there had been some shortcoming in the preparation of those paragraphs since, in fact, a number of programmes were in place to promote the cultures of indigenous peoples, including teaching training in indigenous languages. She undertook to provide full written information in that regard.

54. Referring to the questions asked by Mr. Simma, she said that it was difficult to apply adequate programmes to rural areas, chiefly because of access problems: the communities most in need were usually also the most remote. With regard to the National Housing Programme, her delegation had handed a document to the Chairperson. The question about housing problems seemed to have been prompted by a document submitted by a non-governmental organization; questions stemming from such sources were often difficult to answer because they had not been made known to the Government concerned in good time. She could assure the questioner, however, that the entire system of housing finance was being overhauled, and that the programmes referred to had not suffered any reduction in budget allocation. One feature of the reorganization was a focus on individual instead of community credits, which should lead to greater security of tenure. Housebuilding, too, would be placed on a more competitive footing. Of course, as in all countries, the public funds available for housing programmes would still fall short

of demand; but the Government would continue to do its utmost to improve matters, inter alia, by promoting the participation of the public and private sectors alike and continuing to coordinate activities.

55. With reference to the question asked by Mr. Grissa, there were some 50 ethnic groups in Mexico; but all were Mexican citizens, and the national educational system made no distinctions on ethnic grounds.

56. The CHAIRPERSON, replying to a question by Mr. ALVAREZ VITA, said that the Committee's consideration of the second periodic report of Mexico would be concluded at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.